

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 L-03
H-01 HA-05 CA-01 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 DODE-00
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R 271215Z DEC 77
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 167
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 11105

FOR VELIOTES FROM AMBASSADOR

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: UNRWA IS XF
SUBJ: ISRAELI VIEWS ON UNRWA

REF.: STATE 306056

1. ALTHOUGH THE SUBJECT OF UNRWA AND ITS OPERATIONS
PENDING THE NEGOTIATION OF A PEACE SETTLEMENT IN THE
MIDDLE EAST HAVE NOT COME UP IN ANY OF OUR RECENT
CONVERSATIONS WITH ISRAELI OFFICIALS, OUR JUDGMENT
WOULD BE THAT ISRAELI VIEWS WOULD BE CON-
SISTENT WITH THEIR OPINION THAT UNRWA IS A POLITICAL
DINOSAUR THAT SHOULD BE SHELVED. IN THE PAST, ISRAELI
OFFICIALS AND MILITARY GOVERNMENT OFFICERS HAVE INFOR-
MALLY SUGGESTED TO US THAT WAYS SHOULD BE FOUND TO RE-
CHANNEL US DONATIONS TO UNRWA THROUGH THE GOI SO AS
TO ELIMINATE WASTE, STOP THE PERPETUATION OF OBSOLETE
POLITICAL ASPIRATIONS OF THE REFUGEES, AND NORMALIZE
THEIR STATUS. ONE MILGOV OFFICER IN GAZA HAS GONE
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SO FAR AS TO TELL US THAT "THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN THE REFUGEES AND THE REST OF THE GAZANS",
A STATEMENT WHICH BLUNTLY REPRESENTS WHAT WE BELIEVE IS
THE PREVAILING ISRAELI VIEW.

2. POINTS THAT ISRAELIS USUALLY MAKE ABOUT THE UNRWA
PROGRAM INCLUDE: ITS RELIEF ROSTERS ARE INFLATED AND

OUT-OF-DATE; MANY RECIPIENTS DO NOT NEED THE COMMODITIES THEY RECEIVE AND INDEED SELL THEM ON THE LOCAL MARKET; UNRWA IS OVERSTAFFED AND A SELF-PERPETUATING BUREAUCRACY; ITS MEDICAL SERVICES CAN BE REPLACED AT A HIGHER STANDARD BY ISRAEL'S HEALTH SYSTEM; UNRWA CARDS ARE HIGHLY PRIZED AS DOWRY ITEMS; AND THE REFUGEE CAMPS ARE MISERABLE SLUMS WHICH SHOULD BE REPLACED BY MORE MODERN HOUSING. MOST, IF NOT ALL, OF THESE POINTS ARE GENERALLY CONCEDED BY UNRWA OFFICIALS, WHO DO, HOWEVER, TAKE JUSTIFIABLE PRIDE IN UNRWA'S EDUCATIONAL ROLE.

3. THE POLICIES OF THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT IN EFFECT CIRCUMSCRIBE THE ROLE OF UNRWA INSOFAR AS POSSIBLE. THIS IS MOST CLEARLY ILLUSTRATED BY THE ISRAELI PROGRAM FOR CONSTRUCTION OF NEW HOUSING FOR REFUGEES, WHICH HAS BEEN GOING ON FOR YEARS AND IS CONTINUING. THE LATEST DEPARTURE IN THIS CONNECTION IS TO MAKE GOVERNMENT LOANS AVAILABLE TO REFUGEES SO THAT THEY CAN BUILD THEIR OWN NEW HOMES, A DEVICE WHICH IS PROVING TO BE MORE SUCCESSFUL THAN EARLIER EFFORTS TO COAX REFUGEES TO LIVE IN GOVERNMENT-CONSTRUCTED HOUSING. ANOTHER SCHEME, TO TRY TO PERSUADE PRIVATE ISRAELI FIRMS TO BUILD MULTI-STORY APARTMENTS FOR REFUGEES, HAS NOT GOTTEN OFF THE GROUND.
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4. SPECULATING ON THE ROLE OF UNRWA WITHIN A SYSTEM OF "ADMINISTRATIVE AUTONOMY", WE WOULD ANTICIPATE THAT THE ISRAELI WOULD WANT THE AUTONOMOUS TERRITORIAL ADMINISTRATION TO FUNCTION IN LIEU OF UNRWA. UNTIL SUCH TIME AS AN ADMINISTRATION WOULD BE SET UP, WE WOULD EXPECT THE ISRAELIS TO CONTINUE TO FOREBEAR UNRWA IN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP.
LEWIS

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